

**LAND AT 37-39 HIGH STREET  
SOUTH, DUNSTABLE,  
BEDFORDSHIRE, LU6 3HD**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING**

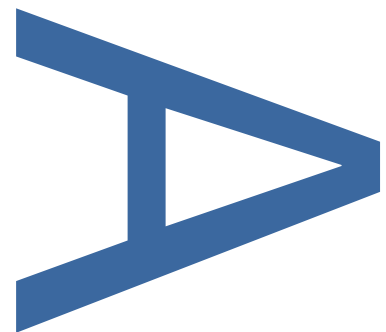
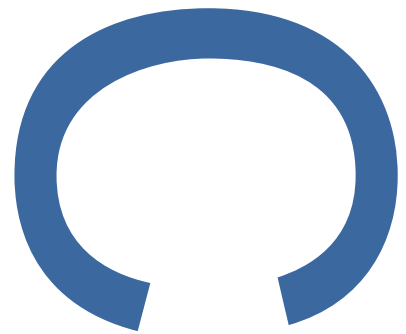
**LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:  
CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

**PLANNING APPLICATION:  
CB/16/01635/FULL**

**REPORT NO: R13582**

**FEBRUARY 2019**

**REV1 SEPTEMBER 2019**



**PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY**

**Land at 37-39 High Street South, Dunstable, Bedfordshire, LU6 3HD:  
Archaeological Monitoring**

**Local Planning Authority:** Central Bedfordshire Council

**Planning Reference:** CB/16/01635/FULL

**Central National Grid Reference:** NGR TL 0202 2175

**Site Code/Museum Accession no:** 2019/6

**Report No.** R 13582

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**Amended:** September 2019 (rev 1)

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February 2019**

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## CONTENTS

CONTENTS .....	1
ABSTRACT .....	2
1 INTRODUCTION .....	3
2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY .....	4
3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.....	5
4 METHODOLOGY .....	11
5 QUANTIFICATION OF ARCHIVE.....	12
6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS.....	13
7 DISCUSSION .....	15
8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	16
9 BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	17
10 FIGURES.....	19
APPENDIX 1: PLATES .....	24
APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT INDEX .....	27
APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM.....	28
FIGURE 1 SITE LOCATION .....	20
FIGURE 2 MONITORED AREA .....	21
FIGURE 3 DETAILED PLAN AND SECTION OF FOOTINGS.....	22
FIGURE 4 1880 OS MAP .....	23
PLATE 1: SITE VIEW NORTHEAST .....	24
PLATE 2: NORTHEAST-SOUTHWEST FOOTING, WELL (106) IN FOREGROUND .....	24
PLATE 3: WELL (106) VIEW DOWN AND TO SOUTHWEST .....	25
PLATE 4: DETAIL OF WELL (106) VIEW NORTHEAST .....	25
PLATE 5: DEPOSITS (101), (102) AND (103) VIEW SOUTHWEST .....	26

## **ABSTRACT**

*Pre-Construct Archaeology (PCA) were commissioned by Archaeology Collective on behalf of the overall client to undertake a programme of archaeological strip, map and sample excavation and monitoring at the proposed development on land at 37-39 High Street South, Dunstable, Bedfordshire, LU6 3HD.*

*Footings for a building extension had already been excavated into the area of the strip, map and sample investigation prior to PCA's arrival. For this reason this part of the investigations did not take place but archaeological investigation and recording was undertaken within the excavated footings on 4 February 2019.*

*Archaeological features and layers recorded were a possible medieval well and a sequence of medieval or early post-medieval demolition deposits during examination of the footings for the proposed development. The well was constructed of a grey clunch stone with tiles. Archaeological deposits overlying the well appear to represent demolition deposits of medieval or post-medieval architecture utilising stone from earlier buildings. Apart from the well no other archaeological features were recorded.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology (PCA) were commissioned by Archaeology Collective on behalf of the overall client to undertake a programme of archaeological strip, map and sample excavation and monitoring at the proposed development on land at 37-39 High Street South, Dunstable, Bedfordshire, LU6 3HD (NGR TL 0202 2175; Figures 1-2).
- 1.2 The proposed development is to create an additional storey for 37-39 High Street South, Dunstable associated with the construction of a small single storey extension the site. The methodology for the work was detailed in the WSI prepared by PCA (Meckseper 2018). The work was intended to comprise a strip, map and sample excavation of a 4m x 6m area located at the back of Baileys Hair Dressing Salon in addition to archaeological monitoring of all groundworks.
- 1.3 On attending the site on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2019 PCA discovered that the footings for the proposed building had already been excavated on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2019. Shortly after being informed of this, Hannah Firth (Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist) visited the site on 4<sup>th</sup> of February and further building work was suspended due to concerns that there had been a breach of planning condition.
- 1.4 After discussions on site and largely for reasons connected with safety PCA was instructed on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2019 not to open up the area up for the strip, map, sample excavation. PCA were asked by Hannah Firth to record the archaeology exposed in the 1.2m deep, 0.7m wide footings for the new building if it was safe to do so.
- 1.5 This report describes the results of the brief inspection of the footings for the proposed development by PCA.

## **2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

### **2.1 Geology**

- 2.1.1 The underlying geology of the site is of the Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation and the New Pit Chalk Formation- Chalk. The sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 90 to 101 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period when the local environment was dominated by warm chalk seas (British Geological Survey 2018; Website 1).
- 2.1.2 No superficial deposits have been recorded in the area (BGS 2018; Website 1).

### **2.2 Topography**

- 2.2.1 The topography of the site is roughly level at 148m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).
- 2.2.2 No significant water courses or bodies of water are recorded within or in close proximity to the site.

### **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 3.1.1 The archaeological background of the proposed development site is taken from the desk-based assessment (Clarke 2016). This has been supplemented by recent data obtained from the Central Bedfordshire and Luton Historic Environment Record (HER) on 24 September 2018 (licence no: 201819-149).
- 3.1.2 The desk-based assessment established that the site has low potential for prehistoric and Anglo-Saxon remains, high potential for Roman, Late Medieval and post-medieval sub-surface features and related roadside occupation. The south-eastern boundary of Dunstable Priory Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1004676) also extends into the north-west part of the site which therefore increases the potential of sub-surface features.
- 3.1.3 Numbers in brackets in the following text are heritage asset numbers as listed in the Central Bedfordshire and Luton Historic Environment Record (HER).
- Prehistoric
- 3.1.4 The most interesting prehistoric remains identified near the site related to the extrapolated course of the Icknield Way, a prehistoric trackway thought to be on the same course as Church Street, which lies c.125m to the north-west of the site (HER 353). This route has potential Neolithic origins and by the Iron Age was an important communications route.
- 3.1.5 Further Neolithic evidence has been recorded in fields to the north of the Icknield Way, c.250m north of the site, pertaining to the recovery of a number of isolated Neolithic implements (HER 1444).
- 3.1.6 During a program of metal-detecting two Bronze Age axe-heads were recovered from a site in the east of Dunstable, c.200m east of the site (HER 18784).
- 3.1.7 A possible dyke dating to the Iron Age was postulated by an antiquarian, Worthington G. Smith, to the south-west of High Street South c.40m south of the site. This was based on street names, with no concrete archaeological evidence thus far recorded to support this theory (HER 19682).

## Roman

- 3.1.8 The site is located within the Roman settlement of Durocbrivis (HER 135) located at the crossing points of the Roman routes of the Icknield Way and Watling Street. The town potentially acted as a pagus, a small administrative centre for the surrounding countryside. Roman material is commonplace, found over an area of about 14ha in all directions suggesting that the Roman town covered at least as large an area as the later medieval town (Albion 2003).
- 3.1.9 High Street South marks the rough course of Roman Watling Street (Margary 1973). This routeway forms the southern boundary of the current site. Watling Street was the main route linking London to Chester, and provided the main route through Durocbrivis (HER 5508). Part of a metalled road surface has been identified c.200m to the north of the site during drainage routes (HER 7099).
- 3.1.10 The former thriving route of the Icknield Way by this time was likely to have been only a minor trackway by the Roman period, aligned perpendicular to Watling Street (HER 353).
- 3.1.11 Archaeological investigations in the vicinity of the site have uncovered ample evidence of contemporary settlement. The closest recorded evidence was identified during excavations at 21-23 High Street South, c. 80m north-west of the site, where a beamslot and associated surface were recorded (HER 11281).
- 3.1.12 To the east of the site, c.150m, excavations uncovered several ditches dating to the Roman period, one of which contained a burial (HER 15822). One of the other ditches was identified as possibly being part of a defensive palisade (HER 11281).
- 3.1.13 An assortment of features have been identified c.125m to the south of the site, comprising of a number of ditches, pits, wells and potential building remains which were associated with a formal inhumation cemetery (HER 11284).
- 3.1.14 Further activity relating to occupation has been identified in the vicinity of St. Marys Gate, c.225m to the west of the site. This occupation evidence consisted



of a cess pit, well and several boundary ditches containing assemblages of Roman domestic debris (HER 11276). Roman pottery sherds found in the grounds of the Priory Gardens suggest that the area may have been occupied or cultivated in the Roman period (EBD235).

3.1.15 Limited Roman activity has been identified to the north of the site, this likely being outside the limits of the Roman town at this time. Two sites have yielded evidence for some Roman activity: one c.225m to the north-east of the site identified a Roman flat-bottomed ditch, a pit with Roman pottery and further undated pits, a ditch and postholes (HER 14965, EBD1104) and a second c.225m to the north-west site uncovered a well (HER 11274).

3.1.16 An isolated find spot of a Roman coin was recovered c.200m to the north of the site (HER 11272).

#### Anglo-Saxon

3.1.17 The conventional view is that following the withdrawal of the Roman army in the early 5th century and the general decline of Roman Britain, the town was abandoned and subsequently avoided by the Anglo-Saxon population (Albion 2003). This appears to concur with the results of the HER records with no recorded evidence of Anglo-Saxon activity identified in the vicinity of the site.

#### Medieval

3.1.18 Dunstable is not mentioned in the Domesday Book, this is likely related to the fact that it formed part of the royal manor of Houghton Regis at this time. The settlement was deliberately planned as a market town around the crossroads in the early 1100s by Henry I (HER 16986). Henry I subsequently built a royal residence in Dunstable in 1123, this site was later known as Kingsbury and is thought to be located c.250m to the north of the current site (HER 148).

3.1.19 The Augustinian Priory of St. Peter was also founded by Henry I in 1131. The grounds of the priory are located immediately to the north and north-east of the current site. The priory was dissolved in 1540, with the priory church surviving this unsettled period and is located c.120m to the north-east of the site. All of

the other related structures, save the gatehouse, have been demolished surviving only as low-lying earthworks (HER 131). The current site, according to a conjectured plan of the priory, is located close to the priory kitchens and guest rooms (Fig. 2). An evaluation c.50m to the east of the site identified a range of buildings related to the Medieval Priory (EBD852).

- 3.1.20 A Dominican Friary was established to the south of High Street South in 1259 by invitation of Henry III. This was located c.50m to the south of the current site, with inevitable friction arising between the two priories. The Dominican Friary was also seized in the Dissolution (Albion 2003).
- 3.1.21 Evidence relating to medieval settlement is dispersed within the vicinity of the site. A medieval pit was recorded c.80m to the north-west of the site (HER 17800). More concrete evidence for occupation has been identified at two sites one c.200m east (HER 15822) and the second c.200m north (HER 15008) of the current site these uncovered evidence of buildings, trackways and boundaries. Isolated features associated with occupation have been also been recorded c. 250m north of the current site; these consisting of pits, walls and ditches (HER 14965).
- 3.1.22 Further evidence of medieval occupation has been recorded c.200m west of the site consisting of occupation related features as well as a number of malting kilns (HER 11273).
- 3.1.23 Possible evidence for agricultural activities has also been identified with a single furrow recorded c.300m east of the site (HER 13357).
- 3.1.24 Isolated findspots have also been noted for this period these include a seal and pendant recovered from c.175m north-east and c.100m south-east of the site respectively (HER 1362/ HER 18785).
- 3.1.25 A medieval stone cross which formerly was located at the crossroads of Watling Street and the Icknield Way, c.175m north-west of the site, was destroyed during the 17th century (HER 134). This was an Eleanor Cross, built to commemorate Queen Eleanor, wife of Edward I, who died at Hadby, near

Lincoln, in 1290. Her body was taken to Westminster Abbey in procession over several days and crosses were later built at royal expense in the places where the procession rested overnight.

#### Post-medieval

- 3.1.26 During the period following the Dissolution the site likely was continuously occupied by roadside properties as illustrated by the earliest available mapping (Jeffery's Map of 1765). This shows the site being located in the historic core of the settlement with occupied properties fronting onto the High Street South. This occupation continued and is recorded on the 1840 Tithe Map of the area, with some additions consisting mainly of ancillary buildings.
- 3.1.27 Evaluations c.100m to the east of the site identified Late post-medieval building foundations, quarry pits and deposits of made ground (EBD187). A series of watching briefs in the area have also uncovered similar evidence, and evaluations to the south of the site uncovered clunch-built walls, some most likely built of re-used stone from the friary buildings (EBD47/ EBD67/ EBD719/ EBD736/ EBD825/ EBD827/ EBD954/ EBD1031/ EBD1228/ EBD1192).
- 3.1.28 One watching brief adjacent to the western corner of the current site identified a flinty concrete floor associated with a brick capped stone wall dating to the late post-medieval period and were associated with the development of the street frontage (EBD1127). Post-medieval coins were found to the rear of the Saracen's Head, immediately adjacent to the site (HER3207).

#### Cartographic Resources

- 3.1.29 The 1880 OS Map shows the site being associated with a 'Hat Factory' which occupied part of the western portion of the site. Four buildings, identified on the earlier Tithe Map, occupy the street frontage; these were associated with ancillary buildings including two wells.
- 3.1.30 By the 1901 OS Map a new building was constructed adjacent to the south-western boundary, with a number of the ancillary buildings no longer recorded.
- 3.1.31 The 1924 OS Map demonstrates that by this period the Hat Factory had been

demolished, with some of the factory buildings which extended into the current site surviving. The eastern boundary of the site was fully developed by this time. This layout was retained until 1937.

3.1.32 By 1963 all of the earlier buildings within the site had been demolished and were replaced by three varyingly sized properties which fronted onto High Street South. An ancillary building was noted in the rear yard of these properties. Aside from the removal of the ancillary building this layout remained unaltered to the present day.

## **4 METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Excavation and Sampling**

- 4.1.1 The methodology for this work was detailed in the WSI prepared by PCA (Meckseper 2018). All aspects of the investigation were conducted in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct, the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation (ClfA 2014), and Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (EAA Occasional Paper 14, 2003) and Historic England's Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE).
- 4.1.2 Archaeological recording within the footings for the proposed development was undertaken. The footings were machine excavated to a depth of 1.2m and a width of 0.70m. The northeast to southwest footing was 7.5m in length and the northwest to southeast aligned footing was 5m. The chalky natural ground was at 1.2m below the current ground surface (i.e. the base of the footings).
- 4.1.3 Ground reduction was not carried out under archaeological supervision. The footings had been excavated with a small 360° mechanical excavator with a small toothed ditching bucket. The base of the footings was briefly cleaned and inspected for archaeological remains. No excavation was undertaken within the excavated footings as this was deemed to be unsafe.

## 5 QUANTIFICATION OF ARCHIVE

### 5.1 Paper Archive

Context register sheets	2
Context sheets	8
Plan registers	0
Plans at 1:50	0
Plans at 1:20	1
Plans at 1:10	0
Plans at 1:5	0
Section register sheets	1
Sections at 1:10 & 1:20	1
Trench record sheets	0
Photo register sheets	1
Small finds register sheets	0
Environmental register sheets	1

### 5.2 Digital Archive

Digital photos	254
GPS survey files	6
Digital plans	0
GIS project	0
Access database	1

### 5.3 Physical Archive

Struck flint	0
Burnt flint	0
Pottery	1 sherd
Ceramic building material (CBM)	0
Glass	0
Briquetage	0
Small Finds	0
Slag	0
Animal bone	0
Shell	0
Environmental bulk samples	0
Environmental bulk samples (10 litre buckets)	0
Monolith samples	0
Other samples (specify)	0
Black and white films	0
Colour slides	0

## **6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS**

- 6.1.1 Archaeological recording was undertaken following the mechanical excavation of the footings for the proposed extension.
- 6.1.2 The oldest deposit encountered within the footings was a white chalky deposit (108) understood to be the geological base layer (i.e. rather than redeposited chalk). The surface of this deposit appeared to have been weathered or disturbed somewhat by overlying activity.
- 6.1.3 At the intersection of the footing trenches a well, thought to be medieval in date (although it is not possible to confirm this), was recorded, cut into the geological chalk layer. The full extent of this feature was not seen. The construction cut for this well [107] was 2.2m in diameter and apparently circular. The well lining (106) was of clunch stones (c.200mm in diameter) and large tile fragments. It was circular externally and roughly octagonal internally. The internal dimension of the well was 0.9m in width. Prior to the excavation of the footings the well lining had survived to 1.10m below ground level.
- 6.1.4 On the south side of the well, between the exterior of the well lining and construction cut [107], a small area of tightly packed clean chalk stones measuring c. 150mm diameter, probably construction cut backfill, was visible (105).
- 6.1.5 A deposit representing the deliberate infilling of the well was recorded (104). A single sherd of glazed pottery was recovered from this context. The sherd consists of the rolled rim (300 mm in diameter) of a deep flared bowl made in post-medieval fine Glazed Red Earthenware (Bedfordshire County Type Series fabric code P01). The sherd is high-fired with a wash on the external surface that has fired in places to dark brownish-purple colour. A combed band occurs below the rim on the exterior and the interior has a brown-mottled clear glaze that has fired to a pale olive-brown colour. The vessel can be broadly dated to the 17th-18th-centuries, although a 19th-century date should not be ruled out (Chris Jarrett, PCA, pers.com).

- 6.1.6 The well structure appeared to have been truncated historically just above the level of the natural ground and therefore, fortunately, suffered limited impact during the excavation of the footings. The truncation of the well may have been in phase with its deliberate backfilling.
- 6.1.7 The well was directly overlain by a 0.4m thick brown silty layer (103) containing occasional clunch cobbles and tile. This deposit may represent a heavily disturbed or redeposited subsoil. Directly overlying (103) was a c. 0.6m thick layer of clunch rubble and tile (102). This deposit presumably represents the demolition of a nearby building (possibly associated with the well itself). Without further investigation it is not possible to establish whether this demolition material derived directly from a medieval building or a post-medieval building that was re-using the clunch as an architectural material.
- 6.1.8 Overlying layer (102) was layer (101), a 0.3m thick layer containing 19<sup>th</sup> century brick rubble and mortar. Directly overlying (101) was concrete forming the modern ground surface.



## **7 DISCUSSION**

- 7.1.1 PCA recorded a probable medieval well and a sequence of medieval and/or post-medieval demolition deposits during examination of the footings for the proposed development. Apart from the well, no other cut features were recorded. Archaeological deposits overlying the well appear include demolished medieval architecture or post-medieval architecture (i.e. utilising clunch and tile from earlier buildings).
- 7.1.2 The 1880 OS Map (Fig. 4) shows the site being associated with a 'Hat Factory' which occupied part of the western portion of the site. Four buildings, identified on the earlier Tithe Map (1840), occupy the street frontage; these were associated with ancillary buildings including two wells. Rather than being medieval, the well (106) recorded in the footings of the proposed development may be a post-medieval structure re-using stones from earlier priory buildings. Without being able to properly excavate the well, its date must remain undetermined.
- 7.1.3 No firm evidence for the conjectured hospitium and associated buildings (see Clarke 2016) was found within the footings of the proposed buildings; however it is possible that the well (106) was associated with priory buildings on or near the site.
- 7.1.4 The high potential of the now aborted strip, map and sample area for archaeological remains of the medieval and post-medieval periods was been confirmed.

## **8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

8.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Archaeology Collective for commissioning and funding the work on behalf of their client. PCA are also grateful to Hannah Firth (Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist) for monitoring the work on behalf of the Local Planning Authority. The project was managed for PCA by Christiane Meckseper and was supervised by A G Pullen. The author would like to thank Rory Fisher for his assistance on site. Figures accompanying this report were prepared by Rosie Scales of PCA's CAD Department.

## **9 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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1) British Geological Survey (Date Accessed 24/10/2018)

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2) British History Online (Date Accessed 24/10/2018)

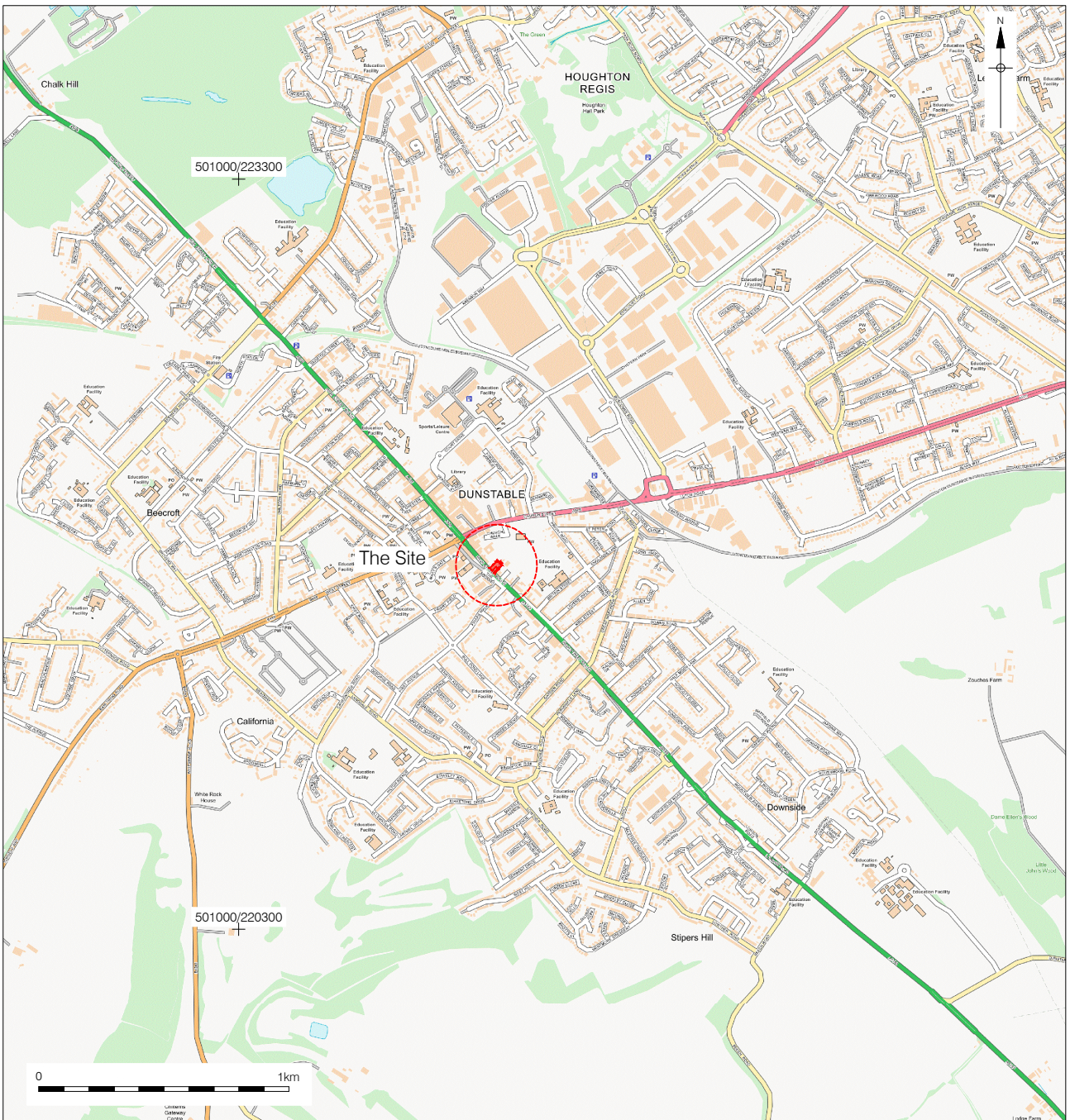
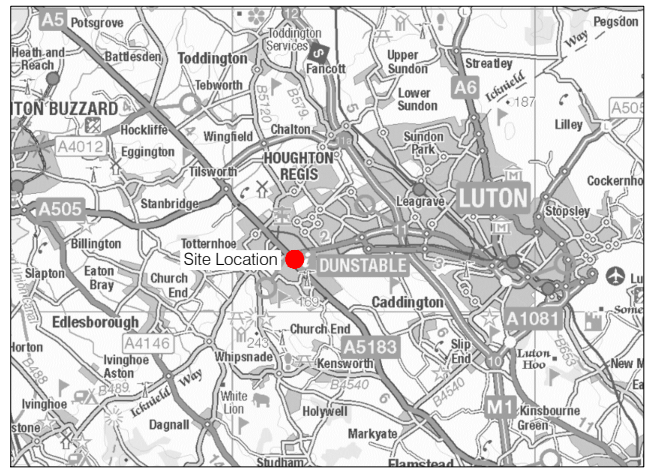
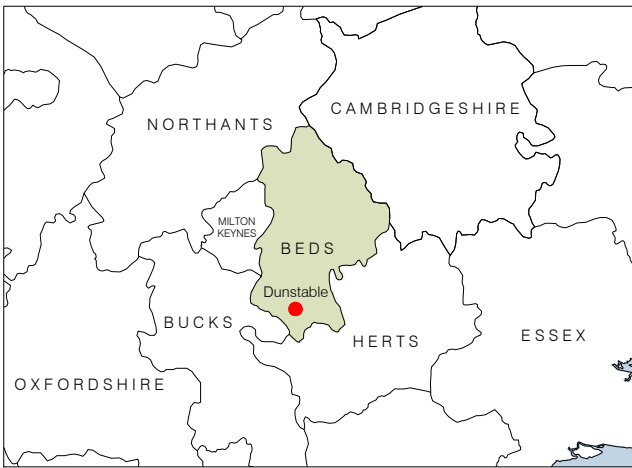
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[www.oldmapsonline.org](http://www.oldmapsonline.org)

## **10 FIGURES**







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Figure 2  
Monitored Area  
1:400 at A4



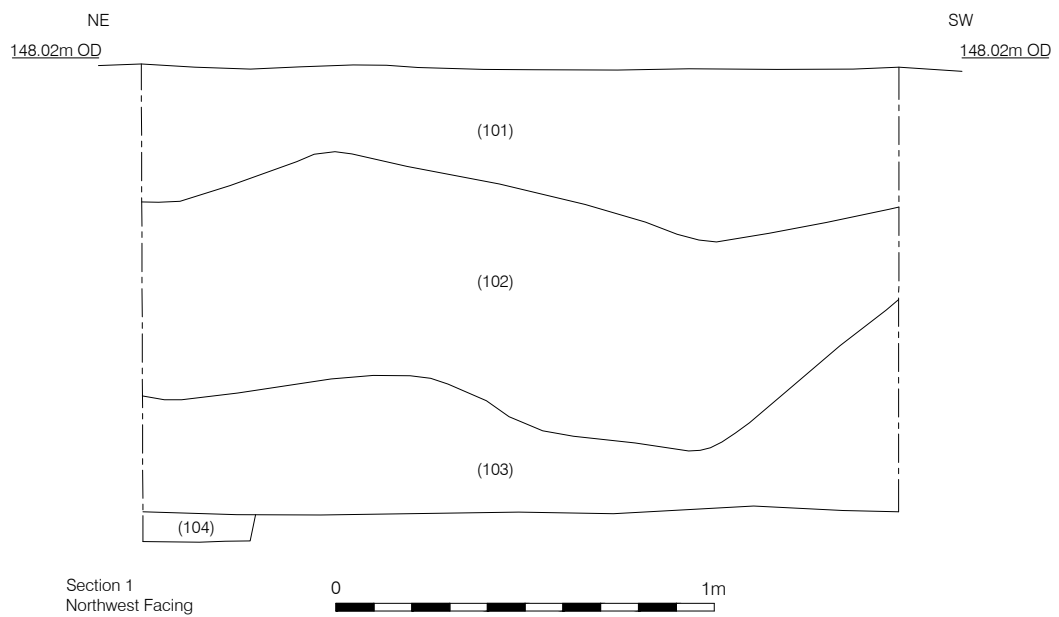
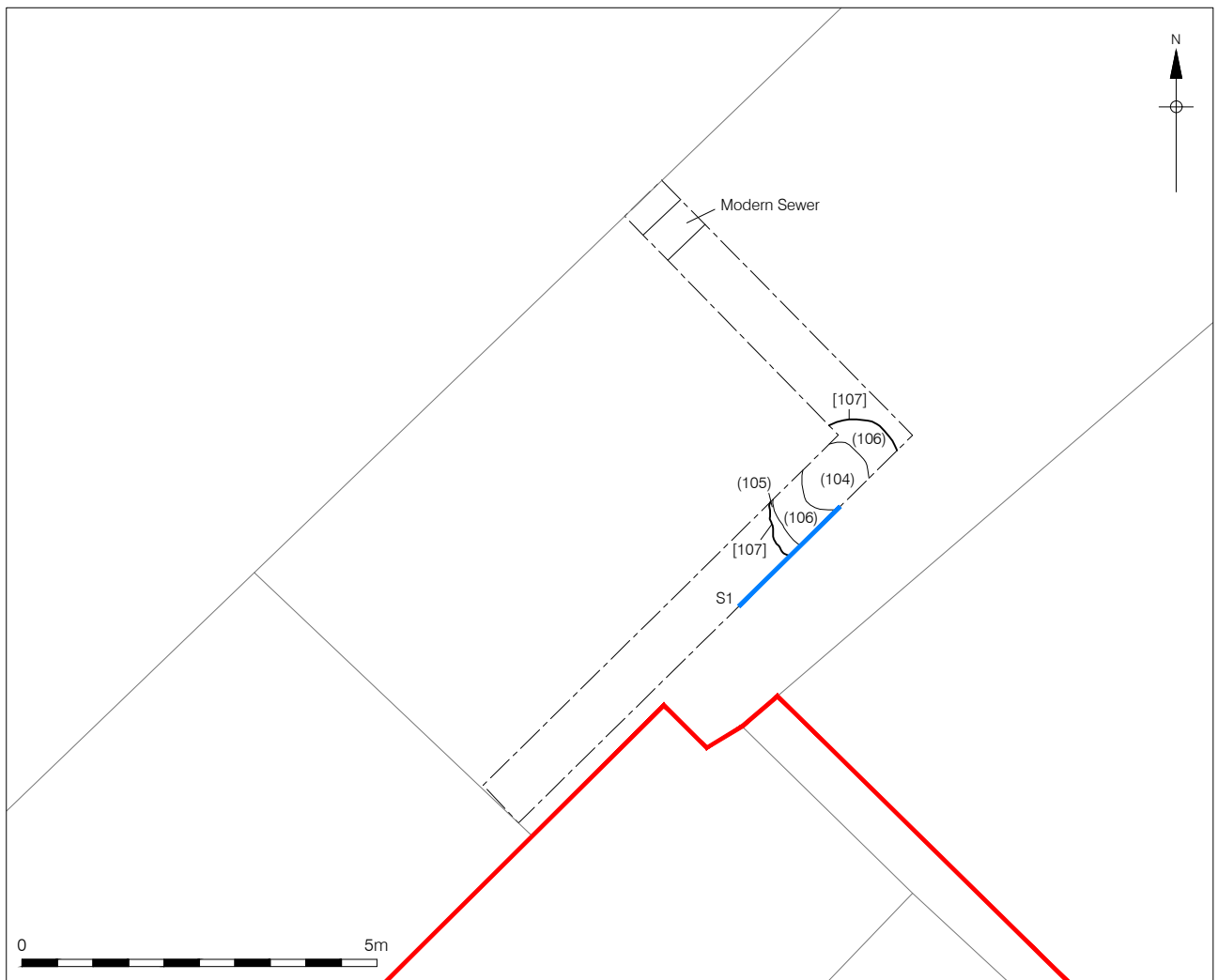
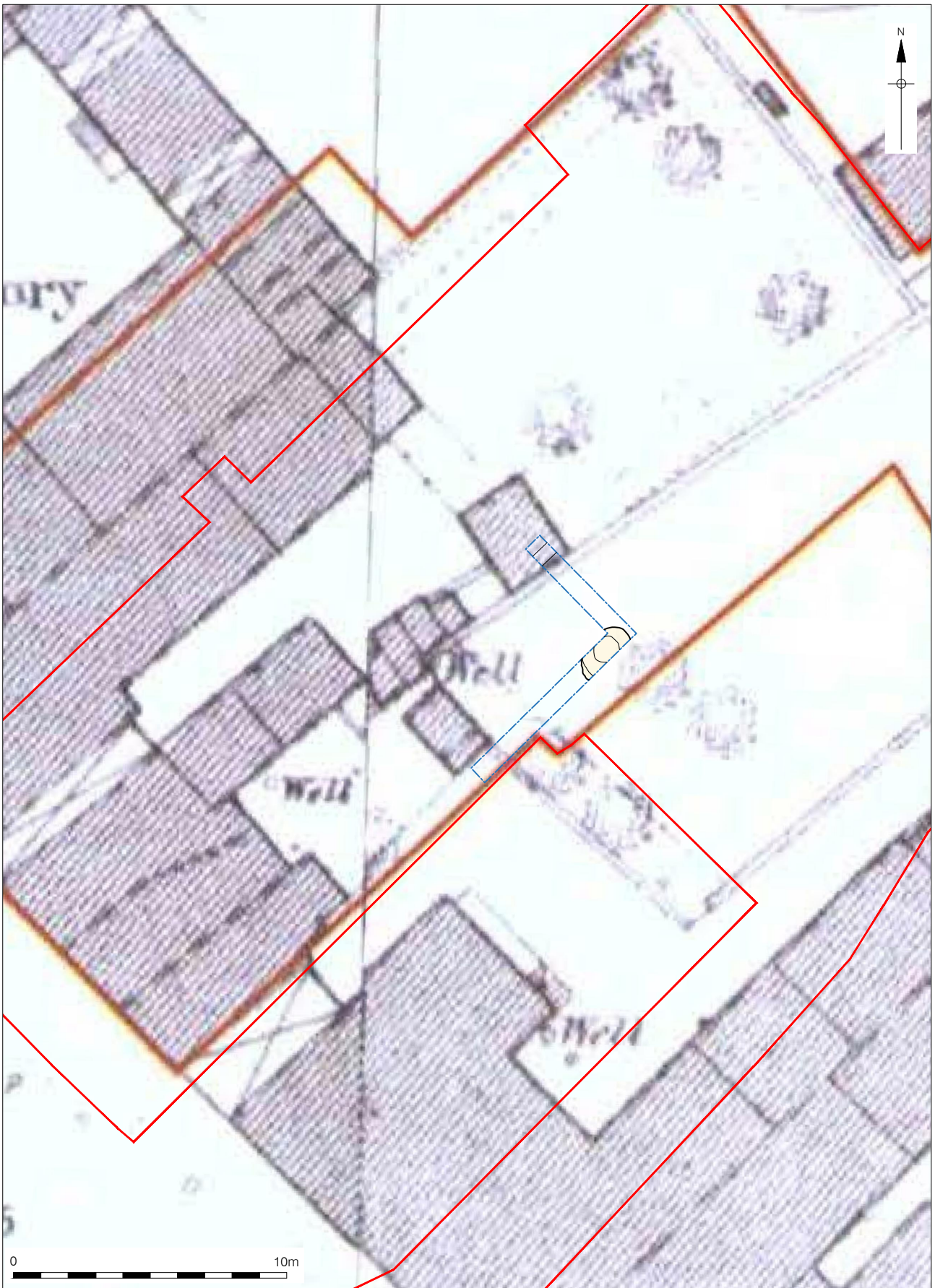


Figure 3  
 Detailed Trench Plan and Section  
 Plan 1:100, Section 1:20 at A4





1880 OS Map reproduced from CgMs Desk Based Assessment 35 - 39 High Street South, Dunstable, Bedfordshire  
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05/02/19 RS

Figure 4  
1880 OS Map  
Plan 1:200 at A4



## APPENDIX 1: PLATES



Plate 1: Site view northeast



Plate 2: northeast-southwest footing, well (106) in foreground





Plate 3: Well (106) view down and to southwest



Plate 4: Detail of well (106) view northeast



Plate 5: Deposits (101), (102) and (103) view southwest

## APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT INDEX

Context No	Cut	Type	Category	Description
101		Layer	Made Ground	19th century/modern made ground
102		Layer	Made Ground	medieval/post-medieval demolition rubble
103		Layer	Made Ground	medieval post-medieval disturbed ground or made ground with clunch and tile
104	107	Fill	Well	backfill of well (post-med?)
105	107	Fill	Well	chalk construction backfill
106	107	Masonry	Well	clunch and tile well structure
107	107	Cut	Well	construction cut for well
108		Layer	Natural	'dirty' natural ground

### APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-341925

#### Project details

Project name 37-39 High Street South, Dunstable, Archaeological Monitoring

Short description of the project PCA recorded a medieval well and a sequence of medieval or early post-medieval demolition deposits during examination of the footings for the proposed development. The well was constructed of a grey clunch stone with tiles. Archaeological deposits overlying the well appear to represent demolition deposits of medieval or post-medieval architecture utilising stone from earlier buildings. Apart from the well no other cut features were recorded.

Project dates Start: 04-02-2019

Previous/future work Not known / Not known

Any associated project reference codes 2019/6 - Sitecode

Type of project Recording project

Monument type WELL Medieval

Significant Finds POTTERY Medieval

Investigation type "Watching Brief"

Prompt Planning condition

#### Project location

Country England

Site location BEDFORDSHIRE LUTON LUTON 37-39 High Street South, Dunstable

Postcode LU63HD

Study area 24 Square metres

Site coordinates TL 0202 2175 51.884519156051 -0.517551937392 51 53 04 N 000 31 03 W Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 147.8m Max: 147.8m

#### Project creators

Name of Organisation PCA

Project brief originator Central Bedfordshire Council

Project design originator PCA Central  
Project director/manager Christiane Meckseper  
Project supervisor Alexander Pullen  
Type of sponsor/funding body Developer

---

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient Luton Culture  
Physical Contents "Ceramics"  
Digital Archive recipient Luton Culture  
Digital Contents "Stratigraphic"  
Digital Media available "Database"  
Paper Archive recipient Luton Culture  
Paper Contents "Stratigraphic"  
Paper Media available "Context sheet", "Photograph", "Report", "Section"

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Project bibliography

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)  
Title Land at 37-39 High Street South, Dunstable, Bedfordshire, LU6 3HD: Archaeological Strip Map and Sample and Archaeological Monitoring  
Author(s)/Editor(s) Pullen, A. G.  
Date 2019  
Issuer or publisher Pre-Construct Archaeology  
Place of issue or publication Pampisford  
Description 30 Page, A4 Grey Literature Report

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Entered by Alexander Pullen (agpullen@pre-construct.com)  
Entered on 6 February 2019



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